

Name: _____ English Teacher: _____

Subject / Verb Agreement

Task 1: Read through the following sentences.

- ___1. Ron's bathroom is a disaster.
- ___2. The speeding hotrod crashed into a telephone pole.
- ___3. During his biology lab, Tommy danced on the table.
- ___4. The bathroom tiles are fuzzy with mold.
- ___5. The big, hungry, green Martian grabbed a student from the back row.
- ___6. Neither of these boys wants to try a piece of pineapple pizza.
- ___7. My dog, along with her seven puppies, has chewed all of the stuffing out of the sofa cushions.
- ___8. In a small house adjacent to our backyard lives a family with ten noisy children.
- ___9. Either John or Sarah needs to pick up this mess.
- ___10. John and Sarah need to pick up this mess.

Task 2: Underline the SUBJECT in each of the sentences.

Task 3: In the left hand margin, write **(S)** if the *subject* is **singular** and write **(P)** if the *subject* is **plural**.

Task 4: **Highlight** the VERB that belongs to the subject in each sentence.

Task 5: In the right hand margin or after the sentence, write if the sentence is written in **(Past Tense)** or **(Present Tense)**.

Task 6: Rewrite the **PRESENT TENSE sentences only**. If the *subject* was originally plural; rewrite it to be singular. If the *subject* was originally singular; rewrite it to be plural. Be sure to **modify your verb** as you rewrite. Use a ***PENCIL*** to do this.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

Task 7:

Verbs can be tricky with indefinite pronouns. Use your reference guide to help you. Select the correct verb. Then, **write out the rule in your own words** that you applied for each sentence.

1. Either of the restaurants (sound/sounds) good to me.

Rule:

2. Neither of the restaurants (sound/sounds) good to me.

Rule:

3. Both of the restaurants (sound/sounds) good to me.

Rule:

4. Any of those restaurants (sound/sounds) good to me.

Rule:

Task 8- This should be easy. Write the subject of the sentence in the first blank. Decide whether the subject is SINGULAR or PLURAL for the second blank. Write the correct verb to use in the third blank.

1. Monkeys (is/**are**) good to eat.

Rule: The subject, "Monkeys," is PLURAL; Therefore, I use "are" as the verb.

2. People (is/are) good to eat, but that monkey tasted even better.

Rule: The subject, " ," is ; Therefore, I use " " as the verb.

3. Children (is/are) good to eat, but taste even better sprinkled with dried monkey.

Rule: The subject, " ," is ; Therefore, I use " " as the verb.

4. The monkey (is/are) delicious.

Rule: The subject, " ," is ; Therefore, I use " " as the verb.

5. The monkey droppings (is/are) fresh, hot, and steamy.

Rule: The subject, " ," is ; Therefore, I use " " as the verb.

6. I (is/are/am) doing an amazing job preparing monkeys for dinner!

Rule: The subject, " ," is ; Therefore, I use " " as the verb.

Singular or Plural Subject?

Basic Rule

The basic rule states that a singular subject takes a singular verb, while a plural subject takes a plural verb.

NOTE: The trick is in knowing whether the subject is singular or plural. The next trick is recognizing a singular or plural verb.

Hint: Verbs do not form their plurals by adding an s as nouns do. In order to determine which verb is singular and which one is plural, think of which verb you would use with *he* or *she* and which verb you would use with *they*.

Example:

talks, talk

Which one is the singular form?

Which word would you use with *he*?

We say, "He talks." Therefore, *talks* is singular.

We say, "They talk." Therefore, *talk* is plural.

Rule 1

Two singular subjects connected by *or* or *nor* require a singular verb.

Example:

My aunt or my uncle *is arriving* by train today.

Rule 2

Two singular subjects connected by *either/or* or *neither/nor* require a singular verb as in Rule 1.

Examples:

Neither Juan *nor* Carmen *is available*.

Either Kiana *or* Casey *is helping* today with stage decorations.

Rule 3

When *I* is one of the two subjects connected by *either/or* or *neither/nor*, put it second and follow it with the singular verb *am*.

Example:

Neither she *nor* I *am going* to the festival.

Rule 4

When a singular subject is connected by *or* or *nor* to a plural subject, put the plural subject last and use a plural verb.

Example:

The serving bowl *or* the plates *go* on that shelf.

Rule 5

When a singular and plural subject are connected by *either/or* or *neither/nor*, put the plural subject last and use a plural verb.

Example:

Neither Jenny *nor* the others *are available*.

Rule 6

As a general rule, use a plural verb with two or more subjects when they are connected by *and*.

Example:

A car *and* a bike *are* my means of transportation.

Rule 7

Sometimes the subject is separated from the verb by words such as *along with*, *as well as*, *besides*, or *not*. Ignore these expressions when determining whether to use a singular or plural verb.

Examples:

The politician, *along with* the newsmen, *is expected* shortly.

Excitement, *as well as* nervousness, *is* the cause of her shaking.

Rule 8

The pronouns *each*, *everyone*, *every one*, *everybody*, *anyone*, *anybody*, *someone*, and *somebody* are singular and require singular verbs. Do not be misled by what follows *of*.

Examples:

Each of the girls sings well.

Every one of the cakes is gone.

NOTE: *Everyone* is one word when it means *everybody*. *Every one* is two words when the meaning is *each one*.

Rule 9

With words that indicate portions—*percent*, *fraction*, *part*, *majority*, *some*, *all*, *none*, *remainder*, and so forth—look at the noun in your *of* phrase (object of the preposition) to determine whether to use a singular or plural verb. If the object of the preposition is singular, use a singular verb. If the object of the preposition is plural, use a plural verb.

Examples:

Fifty percent of the pie has disappeared.

Pie is the object of the preposition *of*.

Fifty percent of the pies have disappeared.

Pies is the object of the preposition.

One-third of the city is unemployed.

One-third of the people are unemployed.

NOTE: Hyphenate all spelled-out fractions.

All of the pie is gone.

All of the pies are gone.

Some of the pie is missing.

Some of the pies are missing.

None of the garbage was picked up.

None of the sentences were punctuated correctly.

Of all her books, none have sold as well as the first one.

NOTE: Apparently, the SAT testing service considers *none* as a singular word only. However, according to *Merriam Webster's Dictionary of English Usage*, "Clearly *none* has been both singular and plural since Old English and still is. The notion that it is singular only is a myth of unknown origin that appears to have arisen in the 19th century. If in context it seems like a singular to you, use a singular verb; if it seems like a plural, use a plural verb. Both are acceptable beyond serious criticism" (p. 664).

Rule 10

The expression *the number* is followed by a singular verb while the expression *a number* is followed by a plural verb.

Examples:

The number of people we need to hire is thirteen.

A number of people have written in about this subject.

Rule 11

When *either* and *neither* are subjects, they always take singular verbs.

Examples:

Neither of them is available to speak right now.

Either of us is capable of doing the job.

Rule 12

The words *here* and *there* have generally been labeled as adverbs even though they indicate place. In sentences beginning with *here* or *there*, the subject follows the verb.

Examples:

There are four hurdles to jump.

There is a high hurdle to jump.

Rule 13

Use a singular verb with sums of money or periods of time.

Examples:

Ten dollars is a high price to pay.

Five years is the maximum sentence for that offense.

Rule 14

Sometimes the pronoun *who*, *that*, or *which* is the subject of a verb in the middle of the sentence. The pronouns *who*, *that*, and *which* become singular or plural according to the noun directly in front of them. So, if that noun is singular, use a singular verb. If it is plural, use a plural verb.

Examples:

Salma is the scientist who writes/write the reports.

The word in front of *who* is *scientist*, which is singular. Therefore, use the singular verb *writes*.

He is one of the men who does/do the work.

The word in front of *who* is *men*, which is plural. Therefore, use the plural verb *do*.

Rule 15

Collective nouns such as *team* and *staff* may be either singular or plural depending on their use in the sentence.

Examples:

The staff is in a meeting.

Staff is acting as a unit here.

The staff are in disagreement about the findings.

The staff are acting as separate individuals in this example.

The sentence would read even better as:

The staff members are in disagreement about the findings.

Rule 16

The pronouns BOTH, ANY, NONE or SOME and the nouns ALL and MOST:

1) take singular verbs when they refer to a unit or quantity

- Some of the money was missing.

An amount of money.

2) take plural verbs when they refer to number, individuals, places

- Some of the gold coins were missing.

A number of coins.

The pronoun NONE:

1) takes a singular verb when its meaning is “No Single One” or “Not One”

- None of the gold coins was missing.

Not one of the coins

2) takes a plural verb when its meaning is “No Two” or “No Amount”

- None of the goods were missing.

no amount of the goods

- None of the forests were destroyed.

no amount of the forests

Rule 17

When the subject is a fraction or a word such as HALF, PART, PLENTY or REST, its intended number is suggested by the object of the preposition that follows it.

- Three-fourths of the enemy’s army is wounded.
- Three-fourths of the enemy’s soldiers are wounded.